

FOCAHONTAS COUNTY

-1-

CHAPTER 4 - Sec. 4 - part a - ques. 5

THE HILLSBORO COMMUNITY.

The town of Hillsboro is located in a rich and beautiful valley. It is two and one-half miles from the nearest railroad station called Seebert, and named in honor of a family by that name that settled here in the wilderness in the early days. Hillsboro was named for Richard Hill, the pioneer from North Carolina, who built his home on a good farm in the neighborhood of Lobelia. His house was an unusually good one for that age. It was built of hewed logs, and the space between the logs was filled with mortar or mud and then whitewashed. It had three porches, two tall chimneys, and eight rooms. Hills Creek was named for Mr. Hill and because of his sterling worth, will sing of his glory as long as its waters flow. The creek flows through a narrow channel which increases its velocity until it plunges over a precipice sixty or more feet and creating the falls of Hills Creek.

Bruffey's Creek named after the first settler, John Bruffey, son of Patrick Bruffey, the pioneer, a revolutionary soldier under General Wayne, unites in time to flood with Hills Creek where their waters sink under Droop Mountain to appear again in the lower end of the Little Levels. Hills Creek forms Locust Creek and empties into the Greenbrier River. Many of the numerous progeny of Richard Hill founded their homes in the Hillsboro Community.

-2-

The majority of the people of the Hillsboro Community are of the Scotch-Irish descent, their chief pursuits being agriculture and stock raising. Many fine herds of cattle and sheep, from time immemorial, have been prepared for the eastern markets and at the present time the farmers are becoming aroused to the importance of pure bred stock.

Hillsboro has always been a religious and educational center. In extracts from the journal of Rev. Francis Asbury we find that in the years 1788, 1790 and 1796, he made three evangelistic tours through this section of the country coming up through Greenbrier County each time and being entertained and preaching at the home of McNeel in the Little Levels, going from there to the Drinnom home in the Edray neighborhood. His course led from there to Cloverlick down through Tygarts Valley in Randolph County enroute to Morgantown. At the McNeel home lively religious discussions were indulged in by the whole community.

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church was organized in the year 1793. The early records of the church were lost and no one remembers when it was built. A substantial brick structure was later built southeast of Hillsboro, where the cemetery is still kept up. The most distinguished ministers who served this church from 1820 to 1872 were Rev. Joseph Brown, Rev. Wm. G. Campbell, Rev. John S. Blain, Rev. Mitchell D. Dunlap, and Rev. D. S. Sydenstricker.

The new church, a frame building, was built in the town of Hillsboro, where the present church is now located, in the early ministry of Dr. D. S. Sydenstricker. He was

succeeded by Rev. J. C. Johnson. The frame church was torn down in 1910 and a new church was built. A new brick church now occupies the site and bears the name "Oak Grove Church" in memory of the pioneer church although surrounded by a maple grove.

In the early part of the eighteenth century a very important educational work flourished in what was then the village of Hillsboro. Under the supervision of Rev. Jos. Brown the brick Academy was built and contained one large central room and two wings. The name of Hillsboro was abandoned in deference to that of "Academy", so strong was the school's influence on the minds and hearts of the people. In recent years the old name Hillsboro has been restored to the town.

M. A. Dunlap of Poca City, Oklahoma, remembering conversations heard in the home of his uncle Rev. M. D. Dunlap, thinks the first teacher ever in the Hillsboro Community was a man by the name of Keenan, who taught more than a hundred years ago. This teacher was considered a very learned man from the fact that he could read and write, and had figured in the arithmetic as far as the rule of three. The next teacher was the Rev. John S. Blain, a Presbyterian preacher, a teacher, and a physician. Next came Rev. Joseph Brown whose gentle Christian spirit greatly endeared him to the people. It is thought that as he was instrumental in building the new brick building that he was the first teacher within its walls. Rev. M. D. Dunlap succeeded him and taught from 1835 to 1845. His school had a wide reputation among

his pupils and enjoyed the patronage of the Lewises and Irwins of Kanawha County. They were also pupils from Fayette, Greenbrier, Monroe, Bath, and Highland Counties. He taught throughout the entire year and sought the aid of the more advanced pupils, notably, Rev. Wm. T. Price and Rev. James Haines.

Mr. Kelso of Pennsylvania, and Miss Priscilla Ramsey of Augusta County, Virginia, taught one session, and after the close of school were married, and went to western Pennsylvania to conduct a boarding school. Rev. Daniel A. Penick filled the position of teacher one year, boarded at Colonel Paul McNeel's, and the following autumn married the latter's eldest daughter. Rev. Emerson taught two sessions, boarded at Colonel McNeel's and made a compass that ran a perfect line from the McNeel gate to the Academy. Miss May Sprinkle taught in the home of Colonel McNeel the first year of the Civil War and was betrothed to John Burgess the first man from this community to be killed by the Northern soldiers in their initial raid through this country.

From the foregoing, it is easy to understand why so many notable people came from this fine institution of learning. The lives of Mr. Harmanus Stulting and family deserve special mention. They were natives of Holland, and to escape religious persecution, came to this country when it was in its infancy. They were valuable additions to the social life of the community and through their piety accomplished much good in this land of their adoption. Mr. Cornelius

Stulting, eldest son in the family, was a fine teacher for many years, and died not so many years ago. Mrs. Carrie Stulting Sydenstricker, a daughter of the family, gave her life as a missionary in China, being sent as a member of the Oak Grove Church. She was the wife of the missionary, Andrew Sydenstricker and the mother of the famous novelist, Pearl Buck.

The first permanent settler in the Hillsboro community was John McNeel of Frederick County, Virginia. He came here in the year 1765.

John McNeel built the White Pole Church on the hill set apart for the McNeel cemetery, the first church in the community.

In the northern section of the Hillsboro community we have Mill Point, a small industrial village, including within its limits proper a store, a blacksmith shop, two flour mills, and three homes. Just above the village is a wonderful spring. The spring gushes forth so abundantly that it forms a miniture cataract. The water is so pure and cold that it is called the Blue Spring. There is a tradition that herds of buffalo formerly gathered in the valley facing the spring and drank from this water, and that it was from the stamping of the buffalo that "Stamping Creek" derived its name. Two of the tribes of Indians that frequented this region were the Ottawas and the Shawnees. Pontiac and Cornstalk were among their leaders. The death of the Bridger boys is the most dramatic story of Indian cruelty we know of in connection with the Mill Point fort.

The people who live in the Hillsboro Community are; the McNeals, Deards, Clarke, Morrisons, Clendenens, Bruffeys, Hills, Moores, Clatters, Aldridges, Harpers, Kinnisons, Wades, Lewises, McCartye, McDoye, Smiths, Cackleys, Ruckmens, McLaughlins, and others.

THE TOWN OF HILLSBORO

(By Mary Isotta Wallace)

The town of Hillsboro is located in a rich and beautiful valley. It is two and one-half miles from the nearest railroad station called Seibert and named in honor of a family by the name which settled there in the wilderness in the early days. Hillsboro was named for Richard Hill, the pioneer from North Carolina who built his home on a good farm in the neighborhood of Lohelie. His house was an unusually good one for that age. Simon Dirty, the renegade, told that the Indians were so impressed with the fine display of the home of Mr. Hill that they called him the White's Man King.

The house was built of hewed logs, and the space between was filled with wood and mortar or mud, and then whitewashed. It had three porches, two tall chimneys and eight rooms. Hills Creek was named for Mr. Hill, and, because of his sterling worth, "will sing his requiem as long as its waters flow". The creek flows through a narrow channel which increases its velocity until it plunges over a precipice more than sixty feet high, forming a perfect spray and creating the beautiful Falls of Hills Creek.

Bruffeys Creek, named after the first settler, John Bruffey the pioneer, Revolutionary soldier under General Wayne, unites in time of flood with Hills Creek where their waters sink under Deep Mountain to appear again in the lower end of the Little Levels. Hills Creek forms Locust Creek and empties into the Greenbrier River. Bruffeys Creek forms Hughes Creek, and after sinking and partly sinking for two miles, empties into the Blue Hole. Many of the numerous progeny of Richard Hill found their homes in the Hillsboro community.

The majority of the people of Hillsboro Community are of Scotch Irish descent, their chief pursuits being agriculture and stock raising. Many fine herds of cattle and sheep, from time immemorial, have been prepared for the eastern markets, and at the present time under the stimulus of our county agent, Mr. H.C. C. Willey, the farmers are becoming thoroughly aroused as to the importance of purebred stock.

As the traveler ascends by an easy climb and gentle undulations the winding road out on the face of Droop Mountain he beholds a panorama of unsurpassed loveliness when the sun pours his effulgent warmth and brightness over mountains, plains, valleys and hills as they unite in proclaiming "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." He also beholds historic ground, for it was at the foot of Droop Mountain where General Averill with 5000 men pitched their tents before the battle of Droop Mountain which began on November 6, 1863.

Hillsboro has always been a religious and educational center. John Jordan of Pioneer fame, gave a building site to the Methodist church, which was destroyed by fire. They have since built four other churches in the community and now worship in a very comfortable, commodious building in the town of Hillsboro. In extracts from the journal of Rev. Francis Asbury, we find that in the years 1788, 1790 and 1791 he made three evangelistic tours through this section of the country, coming up through Greenbrier County, each time and being entertained and preaching at the home of McNeel in the Little Levels, going from there to the Drinnan home where he was received so "gladly" and entertained so "kindly" in the Edray neighborhood. His course led from there to Cloverlick, down through Tygarts Valley in Randolph County enroute to Morgantown. At the McNeel home lively religious discussions were indulged in by the whole community.

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church was organized in the year 1793. The early records of the Church were lost and no one remembers when it was built. A substantial brick structure in which this sect worshiped for many years was later built south east of Hillsboro, where the cemetery is still kept up. In 1830 the church was re-organized and Josiah Beard, Davis Poague, and John Jordan were elected elders. The most distinguished ministers who served this Church from 1820 to 1872 were Rev. Joseph Brown, Rev. Wm. G. Campbell, Rev. John S. Blain, Rev. Mitchell S. Dunlap and Rev. D. S. Sydenstricker.

In the early part of the eighteenth century a very important educational work flourished in what was then the Village of Hillsboro. Under the supervision of Rev.



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 people. In recent years the old name of Hillsboro has been restored to the town.

M. A. Dunlap, of Ponca City, Oklahoma, has contributed some recollections of  
 ante bellum days from his remarkable memory of conversations heard in the home of his  
 uncle, Rev. M. A. Dunlap. He thinks the first teacher ever in Hillsboro community  
 was a man by the name of Keenan who taught more than a hundred years ago. This teacher  
 was considered a very learned man from the fact that he could read and write and had  
 figured in the arithmetic as far as the rule of three.

The next teacher was Rev. John S. Blain, a Presbyterian preacher, a teacher,  
 and a physician. He is described as a large, lean, strong man, possessed of a kindly  
 face and gentle heart. The description is somewhat contradictory as he is said to  
 have whipped 13 boys the second day of school, 21 the third day, and five or six  
 each day for about a week. After that no further trouble was experienced. "At the  
 school had an unsavory reputation that had to be disciplined and he used the means  
 within his power. The wife of Dr. Blain was a Miss MacRoberts, sister of Archibald  
 MacRoberts, who made his home with them, told that panthers would sometimes enter  
 their spring house and drink their milk. Mrs. MacRoberts, whose father was Randolph,  
 of Roanoke, and a descendent of Pocahontas, was the next teacher. He was well educated  
 and a man of great talents that he used only under compulsion. He was a Whig, and  
 in a campaign then being conducted between a Whig and a Democrat, in which the Whig  
 was defeated in the argument, Mr. MacRoberts became so disgusted that he followed  
 them to the next appointment and so completely routed the Democrat that he made it  
 suit to steer clear of his antagonist.

The next teacher was Rev. Joseph Brown, whose gentle Christian character  
 -----? to the people; and it is to be taken for granted that as he was instrumental  
 in the building of the brick Academy, he must have been the first teacher within its  
 walls. Rev. M. D. Dunlap succeeded him and taught from 1836 to 1846. His school had  
 wide reputation among his pupils and enjoyed the patronage of the Lewis and

of Monroe county; Tyrees and others of Fayette county; the Haynes and others of Monroe county; the Johnsons, Beers, and others of Greenbrier county; the Bensons, Lightners, and Ruchmans, of Highland county, Virginia, and the Lewises and others of Bath county, Virginia. He taught throughout the entire year and sought the help of the more advanced pupils, notably, Rev. Wm. F. Price and Rev. James Haynes. It was his opinion that about eighty pupils were as many as one man could handle.

Miss Mary Sprinkel taught in the home of Colonel McNeel, the first year of the Civil War, and was betrothed to John Burgess, the first man from this community to be killed by the Northern soldiers in their initial raid through the country.

From the foregoing interesting data it is easy to understand why so many noble and worthy lives were molded in this fine institution of learning. The lives of Mr. Hermanus Stulting and family deserve special mention. They were natives of Holland, and to escape religious persecution, braved the perils of the deep on the rude craft of that day and came to dwell among us when the country was in its infancy. They were valuable additions to the social life of the community and through their devoted piety accomplished much good in this land of their adoption. Mr. Cornelius Stulting, eldest son in the family, was a fine teacher for many years and died recently, mourned by all who knew him. Mrs. Carrie Stulting Sydenstricker, a daughter in the family, gave her life as a missionary to China, being sent as a member of Oak Grove Church.

Pioneers. The first permanent settler in the wilderness of the Hillburo community was John McNeel, of Frederick County, Virginia. He was of a pugilistic temperament and in the fear that he had slain his antagonist, fled from his native land and became a fugitive who followed the trend of the Alleghenies. After spending sometime in their gloomy depths he emerged into this section of the country and was so favorably impressed with the fertile land, fine timber and the general outlook of a goodly place to dwell, that he cast his tent on the gentle slope between where are now the gate at the road and the lathew John McNeel residence. He came here in the year 1765. After he began to occupy his tent steps were heard circling the camp

night. He feigned sleep, keeping his gun near at hand, until he heard something creep upon the poles forming the roof. When he looked in the direction of the sound he beheld, by the light of the camp fire, the fiery eyes of a panther. He lost no time in getting rid of the unwelcome visitor.

On day while out hunting for venison and fish he met Charles and Jacob Kennison, natives of his home land, who proved angels in disguise in bringing to him the glad tidings that the man he thought he had killed had recovered and was in good health. Imagination fails to convey the great relief and gratitude that filled his heart to know he was not a murderer, of which his future life gave convincing evidence. He invited the Kennisons to share his camp and aided them in selecting a home site adjoining his tract. About this time John McNeel must have built himself a cabin in the rear of the Matthew John McNeel residence, near a wonderful spring in that locality. These three men soon returned to the lower valley of Virginia. It was on this visit that he married Martha Davis who was born in Wales in 1840. Soon after their marriage they came to the Little Levels to make their home. They brought with them a Welch Bible now in the possession of Joseph S. McNeel, son of Captain William Lamb McNeel.

Joseph McNeel is the man who offered, free of charge, marble or granite to build our new State Capitol. This stone exists in great abundance within our beautiful hills that encompass our mountains and that shelter our valley on the West. It has been a source of great disappointment to many to have such a generous offer rejected and one that if it had been accepted would have filled the heart of every citizen with a just and civic pride.

John McNeel was so deeply impressed with a sense of God's providential care that, in gratitude of Him, he built the white pole church on the hill set apart for the McNeel Cemetery, the first church in the community. These three men joined the expedition to Point Pleasant in October 10, 1774. They were spared to return home, for a short time, as they enlisted in a company formed in Frederick County, Virginia, during the Revolution. After that experience they returned to the Country and resumed "the even tenor of their lives".

...etic tradition informs us that while young school was at Point Pleasant  
 ... was born and died before his return, and that the mother, with her own hands,  
 made the coffin, dug the grave and buried the child. This was the first grave in the  
 Israel cemetery, near the White Pole Church, which spot affords such charming  
 landscape views of the surrounding country.

And now we come to the northern section of the Hillsboro community which is  
 Mill Point, a charming little industrial village including within its proper limits  
 a store, a blacksmith shop, two flour mills and three homes. Many more homes are  
 close by built on the hills and nestling in the coves and glens. Tourists exclaim  
 over the majestic sweep of the hills and their graceful contour as they converge  
 toward the village enclosing a scene of entrancing beauty.

Just above the village a beautiful and picturesque spring is found tucked away in  
 a sheltered nook among the lovely foothills that dip their feet into the laughing  
 waters of Stamping Creek, informing each other that the whites were aroused and that  
 they must flee.

The people who live in this community are the Mccheels, Beards, Clarks, Morrisons,  
 Clendenins, Bruffeys, Hills, Moores, Clutters, Auldridges, Harpers, Kennisops, Wades,  
 Lewises, McCarty's, McCoy's, Smiths, Cockleys, Ruckmans, McLaughlins and others.

(In the preparation of this article the writer is greatly indebted to Dr. Wm. T.  
 Price's History of Pocahontas County, West Virginia, Border Warfare, as well as to  
 friends and neighbors).

From - Pocahontas Times

Aug 4, 1924.

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 He built ...  
 ...ing condi